

Scripted Spaces: The Geopoetics of the Newspaper from Tret'iakov to Prigov

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Texts shape space, and space shapes texts. Through this double recognition, a geopoetic framework recognizes that spatial imaginaries and geopolitical realities are dynamically interrelated.¹ A new geopolitical reality requires a new spatial imaginary and so “*a new symbolic form in order to be understood*.”² Works of art and literature can point to the limits of conventional geopolitical accounts by highlighting how notions of place and space—the city, the country, the nation, the empire, east and west, proximity and distance, the world—are discursively constructed, are made, not given. At the same time, geopoetics also stresses the importance of a geographic, geopolitical perspective to the study of cultural production. This essay deploys a geopoetic framework to examine two radical artists’ use of the newspaper in their search for a symbolic form adequate to the geopolitical flux at the beginning and end-points of Soviet history: Sergei Tret'iakov's championing of the newspaper as the Soviet Tolstoi in the 1920s and Dmitrii Prigov's newspaper works of the late-Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Through their work, I show how the newspaper provided a key symbolic form for literary, artistic, and geopolitical projections of Russian, Soviet and global space.

An information revolution brought virtual unity to the vast, widely dispersed European empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This revolution helped reproduce and propagate ideas about space, even as it mapped global space in new ways—for example, as a series of interconnecting telegraph lines.³ Thanks to the invention of the telegraph and the rotary press, which in turn led to the rise of “mass publishing and the spread of press syndicates,” the key medium in the nineteenth-century information revolution was the newspaper.⁴ Newspapers “spread information widely but also increased the size of the reading public and alerted it to the travails of the overseas world,” thus producing new imaginings of geopolitical space.⁵

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1. My account of geopoetics adapts the definition given in Antonis Balasopoulos, “Nesologies: Island Form and Postcolonial Geopoetics,” *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 1 (2008): 9.

2. Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London, 1998), 17.

3. By 1900, the total length of the Russian Empire's telegraph network approached 165,000 km. Arcadius Kahan, *Russian Economic History: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger W. Weiss (Chicago, 1989), 34.

4. C. A. Bayly, “Informing Empire and Nation: Publicity, Propaganda and the Press 1880–1920,” in Hiram Morgan, ed., *Information, Media and Power through the Ages* (Dublin, 2001), 181.

5. Bayly, “Informing Empire,” 192.

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By virtually linking people around the world, the newspaper also facilitated the sharing of information and support among anti-colonial nationalists.⁶ These “anti-colonial print men” formed just one of a number of new networked transnational movements, such as revolutionary socialism, that spread rapidly as a result of communication systems that were increasingly global, rather than merely imperial.⁷ Newspapers simultaneously promoted two contrary mappings of global space. One was the hierarchical center-periphery, metropole-colony model of empire; the other was a non-hierarchical model of “webs” and “networks,” of “horizontal mobility” and relation.⁸ The latter threatened to explode empire into unbounded internationalism, yet also to decompose it into new national and local spaces.

Vladimir Lenin recognized how central the newspaper was to the new information world at the beginning of the twentieth century and, perhaps unwittingly, illustrated its contradictory geopoetic potentials when he proposed an “all Russia political newspaper” (*obshcherusskaia politicheskaiia gazeta*) that would direct revolutionary energies and devolve responsibility from isolated local leaders (who could easily be picked off by the police) to a network of subscribers.⁹ Writing from outside Russia and from within an internationalist socialist milieu, Lenin likened the revolutionary newspaper to “scaffolding round a building under construction.”¹⁰ It could enable both a decentralized network of information and a centralized command structure, and potentially support local, nationalist, federalist, internationalist, and even imperialist outlooks.¹¹ Lenin’s contradictory account of the newspaper would recur in later tensions within the Soviet spatial imaginary: between internationalism and “socialism in one country”; and between the “network” model of Soviet space, comprising a federalized, horizontally related *set* of constituent parts, and the “radial model of Soviet space, characteristic of the

6. Bayly, “Informing Empire,” 197; Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge, Eng., 2010), 9n25.

7. Tony Ballantyne, “Contesting the Empire of Paper: Cultures of Print and Anti-Colonialism,” in Jane Carey and Jane Lyndon, eds., *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections, and Exchange* (New York, 2014), 232. On late nineteenth-century nationalism and globalism, see Bayly, “Informing Empire,” 185, 187. On the newspaper’s role in the rise of international socialism, see Régis Debray, “Socialism: A Life-Cycle,” *New Left Review* 46 (2007): 5–28, esp. 16–18. On the globalization of late nineteenth-century media, see Dwayne R. Winseck and Robert M. Pike, “Communication and Empire: Media Markets, Power and Globalization, 1860–1910,” *Global Media and Communication* 4, no. 1 (2008): 7–36.

8. Tony Ballantyne, “Race and the Webs of Empire: Aryanism from India to the Pacific,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2, no. 3 (2001), at www.muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v002/2.3ballantyne.html (last accessed January 27, 2016).

9. V. I. Lenin, “Chto delat’” (1902), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6 (Moscow, 1967), 170–71.

10. V. I. Lenin, “S chego nachat’?” (1901), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5 (Moscow, 1967), 11.

11. Although he explicitly rejected Russian imperialism, Lenin’s advocacy of a revolutionary “all Russia” newspaper connotes an imperialist perspective.

High Stalinist period, in which the territory was symbolically subjugated by a dominant centre.”¹²

The tension between network and hierarchy is fundamental to the intertwined spatial modalities of the newspaper. These modalities include the geographies of the newspaper’s production, distribution, and consumption; the newspaper as a vehicle for imagining spatial totalities, such as nation, federation, empire, and the world; and the space of the printed newspaper page with its collage-like juxtaposition of articles on diverse topics from diverse places. In the colonial newspaper of the late nineteenth century, for example, local editors reframed and reshaped global news stories through “extensive use of clippings, excerpts and extracts.”¹³ The “fragmentary and discontinuous” form of such colonial newspapers was “well suited to colonial situations that were shot through with conflicting economic pressures and cultural tensions.”¹⁴ The montage or collage form of the newspaper was also critical to imagining new forms of spatial connection that exceeded colony, nation, or empire—to the idea, for example, that the newspaper could generate, as Antonio Gramsci argued in 1919, a collective feeling among “the worker on the shopfloor and the peasant in the fields, the English miner and the Russian moujik—all the workers of the whole world.”¹⁵ Although he notes the newspaper page’s embodiment of the “very structure of the colonial administration and market-system itself,” Benedict Anderson privileges the temporal repetitions of the daily in his account of the newspaper’s role in creating the “imagined community” of the nation.¹⁶ Scholars have subsequently rectified this temporal bias by emphasizing the networks of newspaper production, distribution, and consumption. Yet whether they focus on national “imagined communities” or the “material qualities” of transnational print networks, historians largely overlook modernism’s engagement with the newspaper’s spatial modalities, while scholars of modernism have paid insufficient attention to the relationship between modernist experimentation and the newspaper’s projections of geopolitical space.¹⁷

Modernism has “no place in Anderson’s account of the national literary imagination,” Svetlana Boym argues, because modernist texts such as the au-

12. Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven, 2003), 8. Even under the High Stalinist turn to Great Russian nationalism, there was “a simultaneous, if more precariously flourishing, internationalism.” Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 7.

13. Ballantyne, “Contesting the Empire,” 231.

14. *Ibid.*, 232.

15. Antonio Gramsci, “To the Workshop Delegates of the Fiat Centro and Brevetti Plants” (1919), in David Forgacs, ed., *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (New York, 2000), 89. Compare the newspaper *Indian Opinion*’s facilitation of “lateral linkages among colonies and non-metropolitan centers” within the “time-space continuum of empire.” Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi’s Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 86.

16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, 2006), 62.

17. Ballantyne, “Contesting the Empire,” 219–21.

tobiographical writings of Viktor Shklovsky and Joseph Brodsky oppose the novel as national form by stressing a modernist imagined community built on alienation rather than nation.¹⁸ Likewise, Fredric Jameson describes how modernist texts present a “tiny corner of the social world,” rather than “the true economic and social form that governs that experience.” Modernist texts exemplify the difficulty of “cognitive mapping” in the age of European imperialism: the “strange new global relativity of the colonial network” that made it increasingly difficult to comprehend the imperial and global system from a single vantage point within that system.¹⁹ Such neat oppositions—between alienation and nation, between modernist singularity and social totality—become less clear, however, when one considers modernist responses to the newspaper.

These responses are perhaps most obvious in the development of the montage principle or what Joseph Frank termed literary modernism’s “spatial form,” a set of stylistic innovations—including collage, bricolage, parataxis, and the juxtaposition of “elements . . . in space” and not “as a sequence”—that drew on and frequently invoked an analogy with the newspaper’s juxtaposed texts and images.²⁰ Cubist collage often made use of newspaper; so too did surrealist texts such as Louis Aragon’s *Paysan de Paris*. The newspaper inspired Tristan Tzara’s poetry of textual fragments, and later in the century, Brion Gysin and William Burroughs first applied their cut-up method to the newspaper and described the technique as mimicking the inherently fragmentary nature of the newspaper text.²¹

Modernist texts frequently connect both the newspaper and the montage principle to global space and transnational networks. Stéphane Mallarmé presents the newspaper as a city whose “vast page” embodies a global “network of communications.”²² Walter Benjamin tracks the “Ur-history” of modern mass media through a montage of quotations, many sourced from the nineteenth-century press, so that the newspaper stands implicitly for the confusion of Paris’s streets and global modernity.²³ James Joyce’s *Ulysses* uses the newspaper as a structuring device (in the “Aeolus” episode) and as textual and physical material from bog to butcher’s paper. The juxtaposed voices and scenes of Dublin are implicitly compared to the cacophony of the newspaper and the complexity of global space—as when an advertisement on the butcher’s paper shifts Bloom’s thoughts suddenly to Zionist settlements in Palestine.

18. Svetlana Boym, “Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky,” *Poetics Today* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 513.

19. Fredric Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, 1988), 349–50.

20. Joseph Frank, “Spatial Form in Modern Literature: Part I,” *Sewanee Review* 53, no. 2 (1945): 227, 225.

21. Tristan Tzara, “To Make a Dadaist Poem,” in *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampiseries*, trans. Barbara Wright (London, 1977), 39; William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York, 1978), 4–5, 29.

22. Stéphane Mallarmé, “Displays,” trans. Rosemary Lloyd, Mary Ann Caws, ed., in *Mallarmé in Prose* (New York, 2001), 27–29.

23. Jaeho Kang, “The Ur-History of Media Space: Walter Benjamin and the Information Industry in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 2 (2009): 231–48.

Franco Moretti characterizes Joyce's *Ulysses* as—like T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*—a “modern epic” that expresses “a global ambition” and provides “a symbolic form” for the modern world-system.²⁴ Yet the turn to “*bricolage*” as a stylistic mode that “accepts the heterogeneity inherent in the modern world-system” owes as much, as Joyce's text stresses, to the exemplary textual fragmentation of the newspaper as to the epic.²⁵ Tret'iakov's championing of the newspaper as the “epic . . . of our days” suggests that the large-scale use of the modernist montage principle reflects the newspaper's as well as the epic's structural proneness “to digressions: full of episodes flanking the basic Action.”²⁶ Tret'iakov's newspaper-epic also echoes and transforms Vissarion Belinskii's claim eighty-six years earlier that “the epic of our time is the novel,” with the implication that “the Homeric tradition could liberate Russian writers from the confines of the European novel by providing terms to assert the magnitude of their subject, their magnificent calling, and the finality of their inherited spiritual authority.”²⁷

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century Russian writers also sought a symbolic form for their country's spatial magnitude in the sublime, an aesthetic mode that both Tret'iakov and Prigov adapt in their spatial projections of the newspaper. For Kant, the sublime is predicated on an encounter with things so vast that “no adequate presentation of them is possible.”²⁸ Although we cannot experience “*limitlessness*” in sensuous terms, we can, by recognizing our “very inadequacy,” arrive at a conception of “totality.”²⁹ What Harsha Ram terms the “Russian imperial sublime” translates the encounter with limitlessness not into Kantian totality but into a “compensatory . . . identification” with “the expanding realm” of the Russian Empire.³⁰ Tret'iakov's and Prigov's adaptations of the Russian imperial sublime demonstrate how the information overload represented by the modern newspaper could be resolved in a similarly expansionary spatial vision. Via the newspaper, the disjunctions of modernist spatial form could be linked to the digressiveness and multiplicity of the epic—a form constituted by historical and spatial boundlessness—and to the tension between limitlessness and totality in the sublime.

Responding to the impact of new media such as radio and cinema, Tret'iakov reconfigures the spatial poetics of the epic and the sublime to imagine the newspaper as a spatial, montage form marked at once by discontinuity

24. Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London, 1996), 51.

25. Moretti, *Modern Epic*, 191.

26. Sergei Tret'iakov, “Novyi Lev Tolstoi,” *Novyi Lef* 1 (1927): 35; Moretti, *Modern Epic*, 189.

27. Vissarion Belinskii, “Razdelenie poezii na rody i vidy” (1841), in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1948), 38; Frederick T. Griffiths and Stanley J. Rabinowitz, *Epic and the Russian Novel from Gogol to Pasternak* (Boston, 2011), 12–13.

28. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford, 1952), 92.

29. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 90, 92. Hence Kant's account of the sublime stresses “a sense of the infinite as an absolute measure.” Simon D. Smith, “Kant's Mathematical Sublime and the Role of the Infinite: Reply to Crowther,” *Kantian Review* 20, no. 1 (March 2015): 100.

30. Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison, 2003), 5.

and totality. Reflecting his simultaneously avant-gardist and statist commitments, Tret'iakov presents the newspaper as embodying the tension between radial and network models of early Soviet spatial organization, a tension evident in the production and distribution of newspapers and other media, and in the spatial rhetoric of moving "closer to the masses" that drove 1920s mass journalism and the development of socialist realism.³¹

At the other end of Soviet history, Prigov addresses the new excitement surrounding newspapers in the glasnost and immediate post-Soviet eras, but also responds to a world increasingly dominated by visual media, especially television, which by the 1980s had become the most popular mass news medium.³² In his newspaper works of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Prigov connects the decline of the newspaper to the death of text-based culture and the collapse of the Soviet Union, underscoring the relationship between late-Soviet unofficial artists and writers, such as Prigov, and official Soviet culture, discourse, and ideology.³³ Prigov's later work highlights the renewed relevance of the newspaper with the return of an explicitly nationalist and imperial Russian spatial imaginary. Although the print newspaper faces obsolescence with the rise of a new global information order, the spatial poetics of digital information—of the webpage and the hyperlink—recall in certain respects the non-linear textual juxtapositions of the print newspaper page. Even as this article addresses the past moment of Soviet print culture, it also demonstrates that the tension between boundlessness and totality in the print newspaper anticipates and complicates the informational sublime of the digital age.

Novyi Lev

In 1927, Tret'iakov attacked those who sought a "new Lev Tolstoi" who would write the novelistic epic of the Soviet Union. Instead, he argued, the new epic had already arrived. Punningly, Tret'iakov opposed *Novyi Lef*—the newly founded mouthpiece of the Left Front of Art (*Levyi front iskusstv* or Lef) after its journal *Lef* had been disbanded in 1925—to the idea of a "novyi Lev." Tret'iakov claims, "it is ridiculous for the lone writer even to think of his own philosophical hegemony alongside the collective brain of the revolution."³⁴ The model of the individual writer as seer of the nation is outdated. Instead, the complex system of Soviet bureaucracy and organization, its "collective brain," requires a commensurately communal form: the newspaper.

31. Matthew E. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

32. "Between 1960 and 1981 the number of domestic TV sets increased from 4.8 million to 75 million, and in the 1980s the Soviet audience began to identify television, rather than the press, as their main source of news and information." Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media* (London, 1991), 48.

33. For analysis that complicates the opposition between official and unofficial culture in the final decades of the Soviet Union, see Stanislav Savitskii, *Andegraund: Istoriia i mify leningradskoi neofitsial'noi literatury* (Moscow, 2002); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2006).

34. Tret'iakov, "Novyi Lev Tolstoi," 35.

Tret'iakov's comparison of the newspaper to Tolstoi and his linkage of both to all-encompassing symbolic representations of the Soviet state would seem to be echoed in Anderson's analysis of the construction of modern national communities through the novel and the newspaper. At first glance, Anderson's account appears to describe perfectly the role played by works such as *War and Peace* and by newspapers such as *Pravda* in the development of a Russian and Soviet imagined community.³⁵ Yet while Anderson argues that the newspaper's role is largely a product of its temporal form—its daily invitation to the “mass ceremony” of “simultaneous consumption” and its staging of history as “homogenous, empty time”—Tret'iakov contrasts the newspaper with the novel and stresses the newspaper's spatial form, associating it with the “collective brain” of the Soviet bureaucracy.³⁶ Just as Moretti claims that the novel rose to prominence in the nineteenth century because it was the “only symbolic form” that could represent the nation-state spatially, so, for Tret'iakov, the newly constituted Soviet Union—with its self-presentation as a federation comprising multiple national identities and territories and its internationalist claim to be the center of global communism—required yet another geopoetic form, one most readily supplied by the newspaper-epic.³⁷

In citing Tolstoi, Tret'iakov implicitly appeals to *War and Peace*'s fusion of the novel with the epic to produce a symbolic form that arguably reflected the Russian “nation-empire,” a “geopolitical reality broader than the European type of nation-state.”³⁸ Just as the novel-epic had provided a symbolic form for Russia's ambitions and spatial extensiveness in the nineteenth century, so the newspaper-epic could provide the “red Homers” and “red Tolstois” that would give symbolic form to the Soviet Union's grandiose ambitions. Following the tradition whereby each epic both draws on and supplants previous epics, Tret'iakov stresses that Soviet spatial extensiveness—and the “great canvas” of the communist revolution—surpasses the work of a single writer: “any individual will yield before the scale on which the newspaper embraces the facts and before the rapid transmission of these facts.”³⁹ Here Tret'iakov also implicitly invokes and refigures another key aspect of Russian literature's spatial projections: the Russian imperial sublime. Adapting Ram's account of the Russian imperial sublime, we could say that the “vertigo” of informational overload is “resolved in a compensatory and transformative identification with the horizontal stretch” of Soviet might.⁴⁰

Tret'iakov's essay points to an alternative set of formal devices for the construction of the imagined community of the Soviet Union. Alongside the temporal rhythms of the daily news as collective experience, emphasized

35. Clark cites *Pravda* as exemplifying Anderson's account of “the central role of the newspaper in fostering a sense of national identity.” Clark, *Moscow*, 87.

36. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35, 33.

37. Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, 17.

38. F. T. Griffiths and S. J. Rabinowitz, “Tolstoy and Homer,” *Comparative Literature* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 97–125; Moretti, *Modern Epic*, 50n32.

39. Tret'iakov, “Novyi Lev Tolstoi,” 34, 36. The “gesture of rejection (followed in every case by ceaseless cribbing from the same oppressive antecedents) is one of the surest markers of the genre” of the epic. Griffiths and Rabinowitz, “Tolstoy and Homer,” 116.

40. Ram, *Imperial Sublime*, 5.

by Anderson, the newspaper, unlike the novel (at least in its conventional nineteenth-century form), offers a spatial poetics—a geopoetics—built on the geographic reach and interconnectivity of its networks of production, distribution, and consumption. Just as epics are a “form prone to digressions” and “proudly reveal the workings of their divine ‘Machinery,’” the newspaper-epic’s geographically diverse but spatially contiguous articles—and its distributed network of reporters, editors, and communication systems—give symbolic form to the vast workings of the Soviet Union.⁴¹ Hence, Tret’iakov’s newspaper-epic figures the Party and working class’s “gigantic axis of social administration,” envisaged as a “collective brain.”⁴²

Tret’iakov’s axis and brain provide spatial metaphors for the organizational role of the newspaper, a role asserted by Lenin in what became a catch cry for 1920s Soviet mass journalism: “the newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but also a collective organizer.”⁴³ Like Lenin, Tret’iakov suggests both the horizontally networked organization of a “brain” and the centralized control of an “axis.” In the “epic” of the newspaper, Tret’iakov also discerns “concentric circles” of geographic space: “the whole world, the Soviet Union, my republic, my province, my city, my factory.”⁴⁴ Tret’iakov’s concentric circles depict a radial, centrally organized empire of metropolitan centers and rural peripheries, alongside the contrary federalist, horizontally networked equality of “my republic” among many republics. Tret’iakov thereby responds to Lenin’s equally influential and contradictory call for newspapers to be “closer to life,” to pay “more attention to how the worker and peasant masses are *in fact* building something *new* in their daily work” and at the same time to conduct a centralized “*inspection*” (*proverka*) of whether that work is truly “*communist*.”⁴⁵ Tret’iakov’s concentric circles also suggest the newspaper’s inherent discontinuities of scale and location and its potential for unchecked global expansion, creating problems for imagining a unified nation, federation, or empire—for projecting any sense of bounded unity other than the “whole world.”

Negotiating the increasing pressure for avant-gardists to toe the ideological line, Tret’iakov draws on the newspaper’s ability, on the one hand, to disrupt linear narrative through paratactic juxtapositions and, on the other hand, to affirm and create spaces of collective belief and community—as evident in the newspaper’s role in both reinforcing and dispersing empire from within and without. Tret’iakov thereby links the contrary centrifugal and centripetal tendencies of modernist spatial form and the competing network and radial models for imagining Soviet space to modern mass media’s transformation of spatial imaginaries.

In the 1920s, the increasingly important mass media of cinema and radio were imagined spatially partly by analogy with the newspaper, which was itself reimaged through these new media and in relation to the space of the

41. Moretti, *Modern Epic*, 189; Griffiths and Rabinowitz, “Tolstoy and Homer,” 123.

42. Tret’iakov, “Novyi Lev Tolstoi,” 35.

43. Lenin, “S chego nachat’?,” 11; Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses*, 27, 104.

44. Tret’iakov, “Novyi Lev Tolstoi,” 38.

45. V. I. Lenin, “O kharaktere nashikh gazet” (1918), in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 37 (Moscow, 1969), 91.

Soviet Union. Lenin famously described radio as “newspaper without paper and ‘without distances’” (*gazeta bez bumagi i ‘bez rasstoianii’*), and, after regular broadcasts began in 1924, the “radio newspaper” (*radiogazeta*) quickly became a leading genre.⁴⁶ Dziga Vertov drew on the newspaper analogy by entitling his newsreel films *Kino-Pravda* (Cinema-Pravda), through which he aimed to establish “a visual link between the workers of the world.” Conjoining the “radio newspaper” with his *Kino-Pravda*, Vertov imagined the future medium of television as producing a new sense of global spatial connectivity: “In the very near future man will be able to transmit by radio visual and auditory phenomena recorded with a radio-cine-camera simultaneously to the whole world,” thus giving “the workers of the world the chance to see and hear the whole world, to see, hear and understand one another.”⁴⁷

As Vertov’s comments suggest, Tret’iakov’s vision of the newspaper engaged contemporaneous Soviet debates about documentary film and cinematic montage, a technique that was from the outset “tied to a reshaping of space.”⁴⁸ Kuleshov, one of the originators of montage, retrospectively claimed that, “thanks to montage, it is possible to create, so to speak, a new geography.”⁴⁹ Similarly, Vertov emphasized his films’ ability to explode spatial relations: to produce “a montage moment not limited by time or space.”⁵⁰ Paralleling Tret’iakov’s distinction between the newspaper and Tolstoi’s novels, Vertov’s appeal to the newspaper reflected his emphasis on what Shklovsky identified as the “plotless” (*vniesiuzhetnyi*), non-linear possibilities of montage, as opposed to Kuleshov and others, such as Timoshenko, who stressed montage as a tool for narrative and spatial linearity: “the organization of the viewer’s attention and the direction of this attention along the necessary path.”⁵¹

Tret’iakov and other Lef artists and writers drew on cinema to reimagine the newspaper as a montage form with a similar avant-gardist and statist geopoetic potential. Rodchenko combines maps, photographs, and newspaper clippings in his series of montage posters made to mark the tenth anniversary of the revolution.⁵² The series offers not only a new, estranging way to think “history as a series of displacements” but also a newspaper-like col-

46. V. I. Lenin to M. A. Bonch-Bruевич, February 5, 1920, cited in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 40 (Moscow, 1974), 478. On the rise of the *radiogazeta* genre in the 1920s, see Stephen Lovell, “Broadcasting Bolsheviks: The Radio Voice of Soviet Culture, 1920s–1950s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 1 (January 2012): 83.

47. Dziga Vertov, “Kinopravda” i “Radiopravda,” *Pravda*, July 16, 1925, translated as “Cine-Pravda and Radio-Pravda,” in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, ed., Richard Taylor, trans., *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939* (London, 1988), 130–31.

48. Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, 64. Tret’iakov may have contributed to the development of Eisenstein’s theory of montage. Devin Fore, “All the Graphs: Soviet and Weimar Documentary between the Wars” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2006), 188–89.

49. Lev Kuleshov, “The Origins of Montage,” in Luda Schnitzer, Jean Schnitzer, and Marcel Martin, eds., David Robinson, trans., *Cinema in Revolution: The Heroic Era of Soviet Cinema* (New York, 1973), 68.

50. Dziga Vertov, “Provisional Instructions to the Cinema-Eye Groups” (1926), in “The Factory of Facts and Other Writings,” trans. Kevin O’Brien, *October* 7 (Winter 1978): 121.

51. Viktor Shklovskii, “Sergei Eizenshtein i ‘neigrovaia fil’m,’” *Novyi Lef* 4 (1927): 35; Sergei Timoshenko, *Iskusstvo kino: Montazh fil’m* (Leningrad, 1926), 17.

52. A. M. Rodchenko, “Istoriia VKP(b) v plakatakh,” *Novyi Lef* 3 (1927): 17.

lective mapping of the Soviet nation.⁵³ Chuzhak, another regular contributor to *Novyi Lef*, also connected the newspaper to cinema in describing its “montage of documentary facts,” a phrase that recalls Shklovsky’s account of “non-played,” documentary film, published in *Novyi Lef* the previous year, as “above all ‘montage’ film.”⁵⁴ Chuzhak argued for a literature of “life-construction” (*zhiznestroenie*) that would transform the newspaper from a mere receptacle of information into a “daily montage” of the “living fact” (*zhivoi fakt*), so linking Soviet construction to Symbolist life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*), and conjoining the futurist self-sufficient word—and the Christian word made flesh—with a Soviet emphasis on utilitarian information.⁵⁵

Tret’iakov’s and Chuzhak’s championing of the newspaper reflected the pressure to serve the Soviet state, pressure that increased substantially with the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928 and that in literature also stemmed from the influence of mass journalism, which *Lef* writers both welcomed and helped to intensify. The newspaper allowed *Lef* writers to preserve the avant-garde emphasis on montage, spatial form, and juxtaposition. Tret’iakov’s presentation of the paper as the “New Lev Tolstoy” served in part as a preemptive strike against the following year’s Tolstoi anniversary, which “became a focal point in the campaign to reorient Soviet literature away from its avant garde tendencies toward the accessible tradition of the ‘classics.’”⁵⁶ For Tret’iakov, the newspaper proved poetically and politically expedient. The fundamental complexity of its geopoetic form provided a vehicle for imagining the Soviet system and a model for modernism’s sweeping away of conservative belletrist assumptions about literary genre, form, and unity.

Tret’iakov connects the geopoetics of the newspaper to his iconoclasm through the *ocherk* or journalistic sketch. This genre would play a leading role in the fusion of literature and mass journalism in the tenets of socialist realism, even as the *Lef* writers themselves were excoriated for their privileging of facts over ideological imperatives and the *ocherk* over all other genres of literature.⁵⁷ In his *ocherk* works, Tret’iakov fuses journalistic writing with the newspaper’s remapping of spatial organization, anticipating and later drawing on the genre’s association with the drive for writers to travel out to the countryside—and thus with the transformation of spatial relations envisaged by the Great Break.

53. Leah Dickerman, “The Fact and the Photograph,” *October* 118 (2006): 151.

54. Shklovskii, “Sergei Eizenshtein i ‘neigrovaia fil’ma,’” 34.

55. Nikolai Chuzhak, “Literatura zhiznestroeniia,” *Novyi Lef* 11 (1928): 17. On the conjunction of Russian futurism’s efforts to make “new referents” and the Christian incarnation of the word, see Krystyna Pomorska, “Maiakovskii and the Myth of Immortality in the Russian Avant-Garde,” in Henryk Baran, ed., *Jakobsonian Poetics and Slavic Narrative: From Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn* (Durham, 1992), 159.

56. William Nickell, “Tolstoi in 1928: In the Mirror of the Revolution,” in Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger, eds., *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison, 2006), 19.

57. Devin Fore, “The Operative Word in Soviet Factography,” *October* 118 (2006): 108; Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses*, 232–40. *Lef* writers were criticized because they “incorrectly interpreted the *ocherk*, opposing it to all other genres of literature, and considering the ‘literature of fact’ the reigning type of Soviet literature.” P. K. F., “Ocherk,” in *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia v 11 t.*, vol. 8 (Moscow, 1934).

Tret'iakov's first attempt at the ocherk genre, "Moscow–Peking" (1925), an account of his trip to take up a position as a teacher and foreign correspondent for *Pravda* in the Chinese capital, suggests the dialectic relationship between a totalizing vision of the Soviet state's vast geographic reach and how the effort to present this space in writing fragments into isolated details that fail to fit the master plan for a new kind of writing or a new society. Tret'iakov begins by counting the number of kisses taking place on his departure from Moscow, so playing up the absurdity of his aim to record "every feature and conversation" of a trip lasting many days.⁵⁸ In the end, Tret'iakov constructs a text of juxtaposed details and moments, emphasized by the short titled sections, which mimic the spatial juxtapositions wrought by the railroad and connect this spatial reach to the newspaper, which presents disparate articles from disparate locations paratactically.

In "Moscow–Peking," Tret'iakov evinces his commitment both to the modernist poetics of montage and to the documentary prose and international reach of the newspaper by alluding to Blaise Cendrars's *Prose du Transsibérien*.⁵⁹ Tret'iakov echoes Cendrars's enumeration of fantastical routes ("Basel–Timbaktu"; "Paris–New York") in his more factual, restrained title. Cendrars sought a new style equal to the rapid movements of the railroad, the telegraph, and the upheaval of old oppositions between east and west represented by the Trans-Siberian railway. Cendrars's geopoetics depends on the geographic reach implied by the railways, the rapid shifts in the text's focus, and the text's spatial presentation on a single, folded page, where textual parataxis is enhanced by the visual juxtapositions of Sonia Delaunay-Terk's artwork.⁶⁰ Delaunay-Terk's colorful abstract shapes break up the text

58. Sergei Tret'iakov, "Moskva–Pekin: Put'fil'ma," *Lef* 3 (1925): 34, 33.

59. Cendrars's work had received significant attention in Russian literary circles. In late 1913, an article discussing Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk's work appeared in the Paris-based Russian literary journal *Helios*, and, in December 1913, A. A. Smirnov gave a talk in Petersburg, during which he probably discussed Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk's book. Nikolai Khardzhiev, "Poeziia i zhivopis' (Rannii Maiakovskii)," in *K istorii russkogo avangarda* (Stockholm, 1976), 55, 82n134, 82n132; A. R-v. "Peterburg" section of "Khudozhestvennaia letopis'," *Apollon* 1–2 (1914): 134; Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglazyi strelets: Stikhotvoreniia, perevody, vospominaniia* (Leningrad, 1989), 107. *La Prose du Transsibérien* is frequently cited as an important intertext for Russian futurist experimentation, e.g., Gerald Janeczek, *The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-Garde Visual Experiments, 1900–1930* (Princeton, 1984), 20–21; Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley, 1968), 156–57; A. Kantor-Gukovskaia, "'Simul'tannaia kniga' Soni Delone-Terk i Bleza Sandrara (K voprosu o frantsuzsko-russkikh khudozhestvennykh svyaziakh)," in A. S. Kantor-Gukovskaia, Ch. A. Mezentsева, and A. L. Rakova, eds., *Zapadnoevropeiskaia grafika XV–XX vekov: Sbornik statei* (Leningrad, 1985), 132–44. Even disregarding direct knowledge or influence, Cendrars's poetry is "especially close to the stylistic system of the young Mayakovsky," whom Tret'iakov befriended in 1913 and whose early work Tret'iakov cites as a decisive influence on his poetic development. Khardzhiev, "Poeziia i zhivopis'," 66; Sergei Tret'iakov, "Biografiia moego stikha," in *15 let russkogo futurizma: Materialy i kommentarii* (Moscow, 1928), 54.

60. Cendrars emphasized the text's physical extensiveness: "this book is two meters long! And . . . the edition attains the height of the Eiffel Tower!" Blaise Cendrars, "The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of the Little Jeanne of France (An Article Which Blaise Cendrars Wrote for *Der Sturm*, No. 184–185, Berlin, November 1913)," trans. Roger Kaplan, *Chicago Review* 24, no. 3 (1972): 3–4.

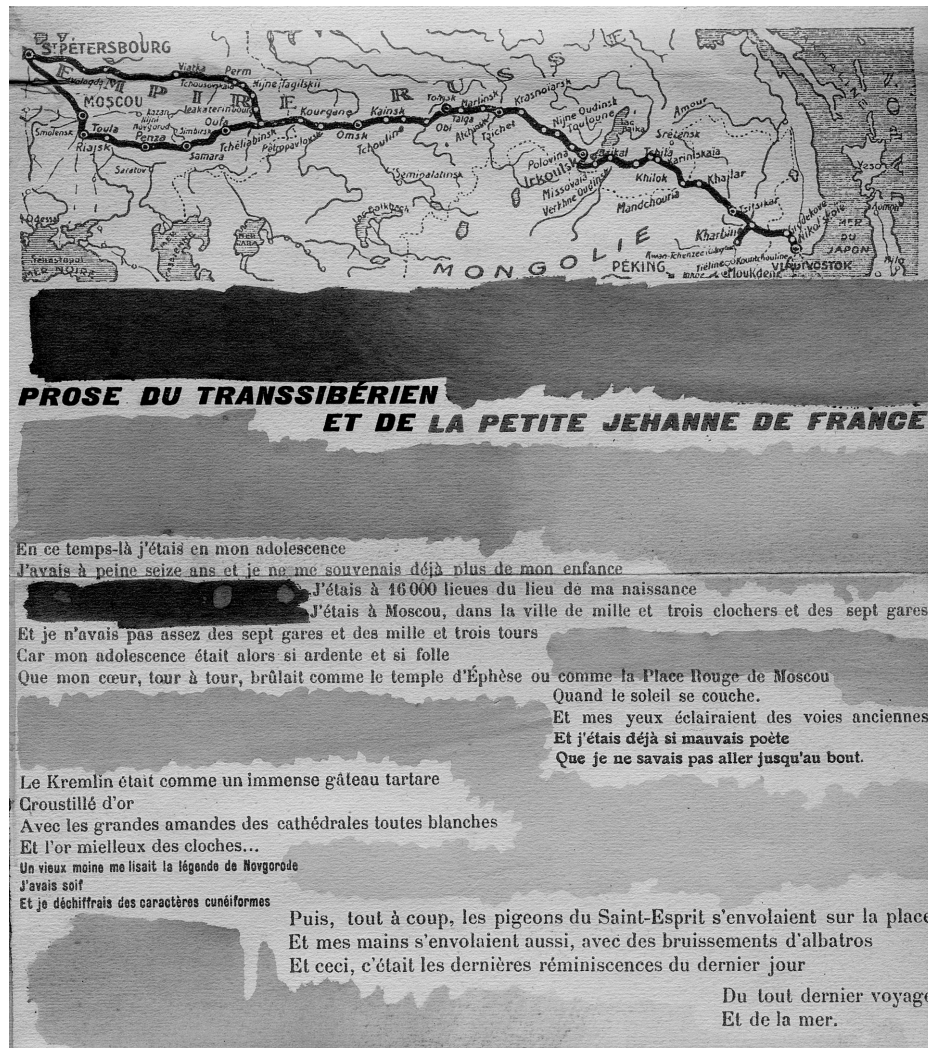


Figure 1. Detail from Blaise Cendrars, *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*, illustrated by Sonia Delaunay-Terk (Paris, 1913). Reproduction courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

into islands of words, which suggest shapes on a map, a resemblance emphasized by the map-like foldout format of the book and by the map of the Trans-Siberian route that precedes the title (fig. 1). Cendrars links this geographic and textual mapping to the creation of a new style of rapid movement that conjoins the lyric subject with the railways: “I’ve made all the trains run after me”; “I’ve made all the trains run alongside my life.”⁶¹ In 1927, Tret’iakov

61. Blaise Cendrars, *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*, illustrated by Sonia Delaunay-Terk (Paris, 1913); translation adapted from Blaise Cendrars, *Selected Writings*, trans. Walter Albert (New York, 1966), 67–99.

would reiterate Cendrars's conjunction by describing the "rails along which my work runs," even as he mapped out the movement of his literary life since 1913 between Moscow and the Far East.⁶² Similarly echoing Cendrars in "Moscow–Peking," Tret'iakov's style is nodal, a series of stops on a train journey punctuated by spatial and textual leaps: Yekaterinburg, Omsk, Baikal, Chita, Manchuria, Harbin, and even, in the title of one section, "A Trip to the Moon" (*Puteshestvie na lunu*).

Tret'iakov also draws on the filmic, montage qualities of Cendrars's writing that made him attractive to Sergei Eisenstein.⁶³ Cendrars's foreshadowing of the cinematic technique of rapidly shifting shot and scene is made explicit by Tret'iakov's subtitling "Moscow–Peking" a "Journey-Film" (*Put'fil'ma*). Tret'iakov's "journey" across the Soviet Union becomes both the flickering montage images of "film" and a mode of writing that maps space through an equally paratactic, fragmentary form. In analogizing his fragmentary writing to film, Tret'iakov recalls the turn-of-the-century Russian newspaper genre "The Cinematograph," which comprised an "indiscriminate medley of casual street scenes and fragments of overheard conversations . . . legitimised by the very first, Lumière-inspired image of the cinematic text."⁶⁴ Tret'iakov's section title "A Trip to the Moon" alludes directly to early cinema, to Georges Méliès's *Le Voyage dans la lune*—the film that first attracted Cendrars to the cinema.⁶⁵

Tret'iakov's "Moscow–Peking" responds to the challenge for literature posed by a revolution in geopolitics, media, and documentary modes, a challenge that Cendrars's *Prose du Transsibérien* also addresses:

As Guillaume Apollinaire says

One can read everything about war in Kuropatkin's *Memoirs*
Or in the Japanese newspapers which are also cruelly illustrated
What's the use of documenting myself

Cendrars presents the geopolitical upheaval of Japan's defeat of Russia, recounted in "Kuropatkin's *Memoirs*" and "Japanese newspapers," as necessitating a new geopoetic form of global interconnectivity.⁶⁶ Tret'iakov echoes

62. Tret'iakov, "Biografiia moego stikha," 56.

63. In 1930, Eisenstein sought the rights to produce a film based on Cendrars's novel *L'Or*, which had appeared in Russian translation in 1926. Jay Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars: Discovery and Re-Creation* (Toronto, 1978), 73. The resulting film script is notable for taking "as many . . . geographical liberties as Cendrars did." William Richardson, "Eisenstein and California: The 'Sutter's Gold' Episode," *California History* 59, no. 3 (1980): 196.

64. Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*, trans. Alan Bodger (London, 1994), 10.

65. Francois and André Berge, "Interview de Blaise Cendrars sur le cinema," *Cahiers du mois*, 16–17 (1925): 139. Mayakovsky's 1913 poem "Adishche goroda" contains "an allusion to the famous moon image from *Le Voyage dans la lune*." Yuri Tsivian, "Méliès in Russia: A Reception Study," in Paolo Cherchi Usai, ed., *A Trip to the Movies: Georges Méliès, Filmmaker and Magician (1861–1938)* (Pordenone, 1991), 125. Tret'iakov first came under the influence of futurism through his 1913 encounter with Maiakovskii's poetry and so was probably aware of the allusion and the stylistic association between Méliès and futurism. Tret'iakov, "Biografiia moego stikha," 53–54.

66. Compare Paul-Louis Couchoud, who cited Japan's defeat of a European power, transmitted "throughout the world" by "the telegraph" and "the daily paper," as trans-

Cendrars in beginning with a similar challenge from a fellow writer, Osip Brik, who implores Tret'iakov to "Kodak" (to photograph) everything, to omit no details. Tret'iakov's solution to the problems posed for literature by an age of global communication, rapid transportation, and mass journalism emphasizes the visual and documentary forms—the illustrated newspaper and the memoir—and the turn to the Far East that Cendrars cites. Tret'iakov draws on Cendrars, cinema, and photography to update a nineteenth-century print genre through new twentieth-century technologies, producing a radical poetics of remapping that fuses avant-gardist and statist poetics of space. Tret'iakov goes further than Cendrars, however, jettisoning poetry altogether in favor of the memoir-journalism of the ocherk. "Moscow–Peking" thus anticipates Tret'iakov's imagining of Soviet and global extensiveness through the fusion of modernist montage with the geopoetics of the newspaper.

In another programmatic ocherk that also appeals to a new twentieth-century technology, "Skvoz' neprotertye ochki" (Through Unpolished Glasses), Tret'iakov links his advocacy of a new mode of journalistic writing to the imagining and traversal of space by describing his plane flight from Moscow to Mineral'nye Vody. The ocherk was published first in *Novyi Lef* in 1928 and again in *Literature of Fact* in 1929, before appearing as the first chapter of *Vyzov* (1930), a series of ocherki about the time he spent on an eponymous cluster of collective farms.⁶⁷ The two earlier versions of the ocherk are subtitled "Putevka." Like the subtitle of "Moscow–Peking," "Put'fil'ma," the subtitle "Putevka" connects travel to the ocherk genre of the first-person journalistic sketch. In associating the literature of fact with the mapping of terrain beyond the metropolis, Tret'iakov responded to the call for literature—taking its lead from Soviet mass journalism—to organize and direct the masses, a call that became an imperative in 1928 with the launch of the First Five-Year Plan. Tret'iakov's 1928 ocherk anticipates the RAPP writers' application of the lessons of Soviet mass journalism to literature and their later presentation of the ocherk, in 1930, as "the genre best fitted for the years of the Great Break because of its accessibility to general audiences, its organizational role (combining party directives with sketches from the point of production), and its siting of news in the factories and the fields."⁶⁸ In *Literature of Fact*, an editor's note on the subtitle explicitly equates the "new ocherk approach" with "a travel directive (*putevka*), a description of a given route," and introduces the "auto-newspaper report" (*avto-korrespondentsiia*) as "the first step joining our theory with scientific-biological construction."⁶⁹ The note links the Soviet

forming global space: "there was formerly a terrifying distance; there is to-day a nearness no less terrifying." Couchoud found a form commensurate to this new spatial condensation in the haiku, which he explicitly associated with the Japanese journalists who reported on the war with Russia. Paul-Louis Couchoud, *Japanese Impressions*, trans. Frances Rumsey (London, 1921), 7–10, 38.

67. Sergei Tret'iakov, "Skvoz' neprotertye ochki: Putevka," *Novyi Lef* 9 (1928): 20–24; Sergei Tret'iakov, "Skvoz' neprotertye ochki: Putevka," in N. F. Chuzhak, ed., *Literatura fakta: Pervyi sbornik materialov rabotnikov LEFa* (1929; Munich, 1972), 227–33; Sergei Tret'iakov, *Vyzov: Kolkhozhnye ocherki* (Moscow, 1930), 7–16.

68. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses*, 235–36.

69. Tret'iakov, "Skvoz' neprotertye ochki" (1929), 227.

rhetoric of progress and development to the literal traversal of space—as in the expression “first step” (*pervyi shag*) and the implied idiom “*putevka v zhizn'*,” which connects spatial movement to the idea of socialism leading to a new and better life.⁷⁰

Tret'iakov presents the *ocherk* as a mode of writing that, like the newspaper, offers a symbolic form commensurate with the geographic extensiveness and organizational relations of the Soviet Union and with the shifts in the perception of space wrought by new media and transportation and communication technologies. While “Moscow–Peking” alludes to Cendrars's railway and the Kodak camera, “Through Unpolished Glasses” turns another avant-garde linkage of transportation, new technology, and literature to a fresh political and geopoetic purpose. The piece begins with the incomprehensible language of the airplane, which, the narrator tells us, is nevertheless understood by the specialist—the pilot.⁷¹ Tret'iakov here seemingly alludes to Filippo Marinetti's “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature,” in which the poet prefers the sound of the airplane propeller to “the ridiculous inanity of the old syntax inherited from Homer.”⁷² Unlike Marinetti, who effortlessly translates the sound of the propeller into words, however, Tret'iakov's narrator does not have access to the pilot's specialist understanding of his engine. Instead, the writer's task, the *ocherk* suggests, is to hone a similarly modern specialism: to describe the new technological and social reality—exemplified by the view from the airplane—through a new language of space.

Tret'iakov opposes this new language to Ivan Turgenev's novelistic prose. Initially, he struggles to free himself: “You could say: inkblots of ploughed fallows (incorrect, because such finely drawn [*vycherchennyi*] blots don't exist). And why ‘fallows’? I'm not quite sure that they are fallows. They came to me from Turgenev.”⁷³ Later, the narrator comes to see the inky shapes not as blots but as legible letters: “the black stripes of the ploughing on the yellow-green background of stubble and fields take the shape of letters. Most often ‘O,’ ‘T,’ ‘III’.”⁷⁴ The land can be written and read through the futurist letter as such, rather than through recourse to novelistic conventions. There are “no characters” (*net deistvuiushchikh lits*), the narrator insists, only “active processes” (*deistvuiushchie protsessy*).⁷⁵ The narrator puns on *deistvuiushchii* (active) in opposing individual actors to the collective actions of the Soviet system and, significantly, in contrasting a novelistic, character-based mode of writing to a spatial imagining of text and a textual imagining of space.

This recognition of the land as text allows us, the narrator concludes, to “fix our pupils not only on the biological-termite work of people, but also

70. The idiom was used explicitly in this way by Nikolai Ekk in the title of his 1931 film, *Putevka v zhizn'* (*Road to Life*), the first Soviet sound feature, which similarly conflates progress with transportation technology, in this case a railroad linking commune and town.

71. Tret'iakov, *Vyzov*, 7–8.

72. F. T. Marinetti, *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (Milan, 1912), in his *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, ed. and trans. R. W. Flint (Los Angeles, 1991), 92.

73. Tret'iakov, *Vyzov*, 10.

74. *Ibid.*, 13.

75. *Ibid.*, 15.

on how socialism will in a new way redraw (*perecherchivat'*) the face of the Earth (*zemnoi shar*, literally 'earthly sphere').⁷⁶ The word *zemlia*—present in the final sentence in its adjectival form, *zemnoi*—globalizes the view from the air, paralleling the theme of worldwide socialist transformation. *Zemlia* appears ten times in a piece of less than two thousand words and denotes, in ever-widening concentric circles—that recall Tret'iakov's description of the newspaper the previous year—the “ground” (as viewed from and opposed to the air), the “earth” or soil that is tilled in lines described as letters, the new Soviet “land” or nation, and the entire “Earth” (*zemnoi shar*).⁷⁷ Instead of the individual “characters” of the novel (*deistvuiushchie litsa*), Tret'iakov describes the transformed “face” (*litso*) of the Earth and in so doing redraws and rewrites it. Here, he conflates the act of redrawing or rewriting with Soviet transformation by equating page and land, *stranitsa* and *strana*. The temporal development of the novel gives way to the scripted space of the Soviet Union.

Tret'iakov links script and space by activating the original meaning of *ocherk* as a “sketch” or “line drawing” through the discovery of lines on the Russian landscape, which become legible as letters outlining social and agricultural transformation. The words *vycherchennyi* (finely drawn) and *perecherchivat'* (to redraw) share a common root with the word *ocherk*. In this way, Tret'iakov takes the root word *cherta* (line) through at least two figurative cycles. The quick line drawing or sketch of the landscape becomes a traveler's jottings in words, which metamorphose back into the literal lines on the landscape, which are then recognized as letters, signs that write the new by writing out the old.⁷⁸ In the 1930 *Vyzov* version, instead of redrawing (*perecherchivat'*) the face of the earth, socialism threatens to cross it out (*perecherkivat'*). By highlighting yet another use of lines in space, Tret'iakov's deliberate emendation or inadvertent typo not only chillingly stresses the devastation wrought by collectivization but also further highlights the *ocherk* as an explicitly geopoetic genre. As in his description of the newspaper as the “new Lev Tolstoy,” in Tret'iakov's *ocherk*, lines of text map, remap, and transform the space of the Soviet Union and indeed the entire Earth.

Tret'iakov's concluding appeal to the entire Earth retools the aesthetics

76. Tret'iakov, “Skvoz' neprotertye ochki” (1928), 24.

77. Compare the English “country,” which can mean a “nation” or a “part of a ‘land,’” a “whole society or its rural area.” Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford, 1973), 1. Tret'iakov's use of the word *zemlia* taps into the modernization rhetoric of the 1920s and the First Five-Year Plan, according to which “the Soviet territory (the earth itself) was the rich raw material out of which a powerful state was to be moulded.” Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, 68.

78. Rather than simply stressing the visual, as Dickerman reads the conclusion of “Through Unpolished Glasses,” Tret'iakov's wordplay emphasizes the interplay between the visual and the journalistic jottings of the *ocherk* genre. Dickerman, “The Fact and the Photograph,” 145. Just as the impulse to “kodak” everything produces text in “Moscow–Peking,” Tret'iakov's work as a photographer, exemplified by the images published alongside his *ocherki* in *Vyzov*, provided him with a “visual field notebook that he deemed essential to his literary work.” Erika Wolf, “The Author as Photographer: Tret'iakov's, Erenburg's, and Il'f's Images of the West,” *Configurations* 18, no. 3 (2010): 388.

of the Russian imperial sublime. The technology of the airplane replaces lyric inspiration, but the structure of overwhelming “vertical uplift” being resolved through “horizontal space” remains the same.⁷⁹ The aerial view that initially overwhelms the narrator’s comprehension is resolved through horizontal expansion, spatially beyond even the geographical limits of the Soviet Union to the boundlessness of world revolution, and temporally, as in “The New Lev Tolstoy,” to the epic tradition. Alongside citing Marinetti’s rejection of Homer, Tret’iakov alludes to *War and Peace*. Just as Tolstoi uses the epic simile of ants returning to a ruined ant heap to describe the rebirth of Moscow after its destruction in 1812, Tret’iakov describes termite-people whose labor marks the destruction and rebirth wrought by the 1917 revolutions, the Civil War, and now the Great Break.⁸⁰ Like Tolstoi’s ants, Tret’iakov’s termite-people emphasize the triumph of the collective over the individual and a corresponding shift in scale, whereby the reduction of the individual (to termite or ant size) results in a compensatory enlargement in spatial reach.

The equation of the newspaper—with its many juxtaposed articles—to the vast page of the Soviet state (with its many local articulations) is only implicit here. But the narrator is flying to take up a position at the Vyzov group of collective farms, where he will later edit the *kolkhoz*’s newspaper, a task that, as Tret’iakov’s book *Vyzov* makes clear, will require him to come to terms with new systems of organization and production. Just as the narrator cannot interpret the airplane engine, so he is initially incapable of comprehending the systems through which Vyzov works.⁸¹ By the end of the book, however, the narrator comes to understand and incorporate himself into this system, as graphically realized in the diagram with which *Vyzov* concludes (fig. 2). The diagram maps Vyzov’s system of cultural and political education, including its radio and film, library, and newspaper divisions. The map parallels the newspaper as a synecdoche for the vast workings of the Soviet system in “The New Lev Tolstoy” and the bird’s eye apprehension of the new Soviet system as a vast page in the opening chapter of *Vyzov*, even as its definite form contrasts with the shifting meanings of the lines seen from the airplane in “Through Unpolished Glasses.”⁸²

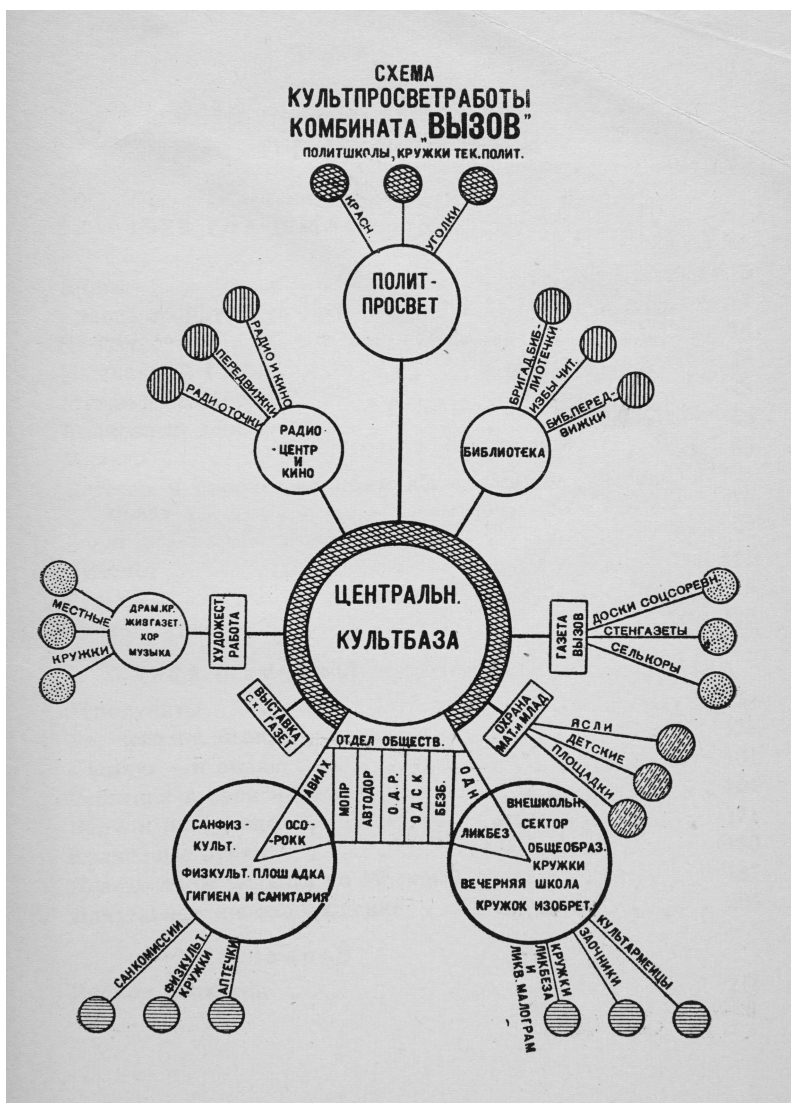
Elsewhere in *Vyzov*, Tret’iakov emphasizes this vision of each local system containing the larger state in miniature. Vyzov is said to be the “*kolkhoz kolkhozov*” (the *kolkhoz* of *kolkhozes*) and “the complex [of *kolkhozes*] is like the USSR in miniature. The founder, what we might call the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] of this federation, is the commune ‘Com-

79. Ram, *Imperial Sublime*, 5.

80. Lev Tolstoi, *Voina i mir*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1968), 221.

81. Tret’iakov, *Vyzov*, 132–33.

82. Far from rejecting the bird’s eye view, as Widdis claims of “Through Unpolished Glasses,” Tret’iakov participates in a broader shift in the Soviet spatial imaginary from “a horizontal, physical experience of space” (frequently, as in “Moscow–Peking,” associated with the train) to “the controlling, panoptic vision of the aerial shot” that typified High Stalinism. Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, 123. Tret’iakov’s writing reveals the coexistence of both spatial imaginaries in the newspaper and in the related conflation of land, script, and page.



munist Lighthouse. 'Yurtmoz' is, let's say, Belarus, the more so since Belorussian emigrants really do live there. 'Vorwärts' is the republic of the Germans of the Volga region, 'Soviet Ploughman' is Ukraine, 'Blago' is Uzbekistan."⁸³ Tret'iakov's imagining of the *kolkhozes* as, like the Soviet Union, a system of interconnecting parts parallels his insistence on the experience of national

83. Tret'iakov, *Vyzov*, 146.

and global interconnectivity fostered by the newspaper. Implicitly justifying the forced intrusion of the outside world into village life under collectivization, he argues that providing the *kolkhozniki* with a newspaper is important because they must not be cut off from “the flow of world events.” “The most important thing now,” Tret’iakov writes, is that in “every step” of their work the *kolkhozniki* “feel connected with Indian workers,” with the Arkhangelsk project, with the increase in Vladivostok exports, and so on.⁸⁴ This vision echoes the newspaper’s treatment as a vehicle for virtual spatial contiguity and socialist solidarity from Lenin to Gramsci to Vertov.

On the one hand, the newspaper might potentially collect and print in montage form “every second” and “every corner” of the country—as Tret’iakov envisaged the ultimate aim of the *ocherkist*-journalist.⁸⁵ On the other hand, Tret’iakov imagined the newspaper as reaching into every corner of the country through a system of national, regional, municipal, factory, and *kolkhoz* newspapers—a system spatially realized in the montage of the newspaper page. Tret’iakov thus presents the *ocherk* and newspaper as spatial organizers and as forms for imagining spatial organization. The traversal and sublime apprehension of physical space through the technology of the airplane is connected, through the page of the newspaper, to the epic spatial structures of what in “The New Lev Tolstoi” Tret’iakov calls “the gigantic axis” and “collective brain” of the Soviet Union, in which the collective farm is surrounded by ever-expanding “concentric circles” of organization.

Yet Tret’iakov’s rhetoric cannot overcome the contradictions evident in his imagining of the space of the newspaper as national system and as unbounded globalism that reaches to India, China, and beyond; in his own journalistic reports from various corners of the Soviet Union and from outside its borders; and in his commitment to the newspaper as a simultaneously statist and avant-gardist form. In seeking to make modernist spatial form serve a modernizing social vision of the globe, Tret’iakov also remains trapped in a contradiction between Soviet statism and a global vision of world revolution, a predicament experienced by many leftist intellectuals at the time.

These tensions are formally expressed in the figures of synecdoche and metonymy that govern Tret’iakov’s *ocherk* writing and his imaginings of the newspaper. The synecdoche/metonymy tension derives in part from the epic and the sublime, whose totalizing visions are undone by, respectively, the epic’s metonymic reliance on earlier epics (so undoing each epic’s claim to have superseded all previous epics) and the sublime’s projection of spatial limitlessness. Via the newspaper and its synecdoche, the *ocherk*, the epic and sublime are transposed into a modernist poetics of information as space. On the one hand, the microcosm of the Vyzov system of collective farms serves as a synecdoche for the totality of the Soviet Union and its information networks. On the other hand, each part stands in a metonymic relationship of contigu-

84. *Ibid.*, 258.

85. Sergei Tret’iakov, “Evoliutsiia zhanra,” *Nashi dostizheniia* 7–8 (1934): 160–62. Tret’iakov reiterates the newspaper’s capacity to reach every “corner” of the Soviet Union, in Sergej Tretjakov, *Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers: Aufsätze Reportagen Portäts*, ed. Heiner Boehncke (Hamburg, 1972), 100.

ity that cannot be delimited. Tret'iakov's spatial poetics of montage imagines a mapping of the Soviet Union but also stresses juxtapositions and cryptic letters in expanding circles that cannot be contained within the boundaries of one state, empire, or system but extend indefinitely to the global horizon, shifting uncertainly between place and planet, empire and Earth, *zemlia* and *zemnoi shar*.

Mountains of News

In the perestroika period, journalists again took up Lenin's call to move "closer to life"—the demand that had shaped the direction of mass journalism in the 1920s—but through a "different language" that was "marked by . . . unedited, unscripted transcriptions of individuals' voices" and a return to the "'sensational' accounts of crimes and disasters" that had appeared in the ideologically problematic but profitable urban evening newspapers of the NEP period.⁸⁶ In an inversion of the increasing control and centralization of newspaper production and distribution in the late 1920s and early 1930s, during and after perestroika the newspaper became the textual form that most clearly staged the unraveling of previous ideological certainties and a unified Soviet spatial imaginary.

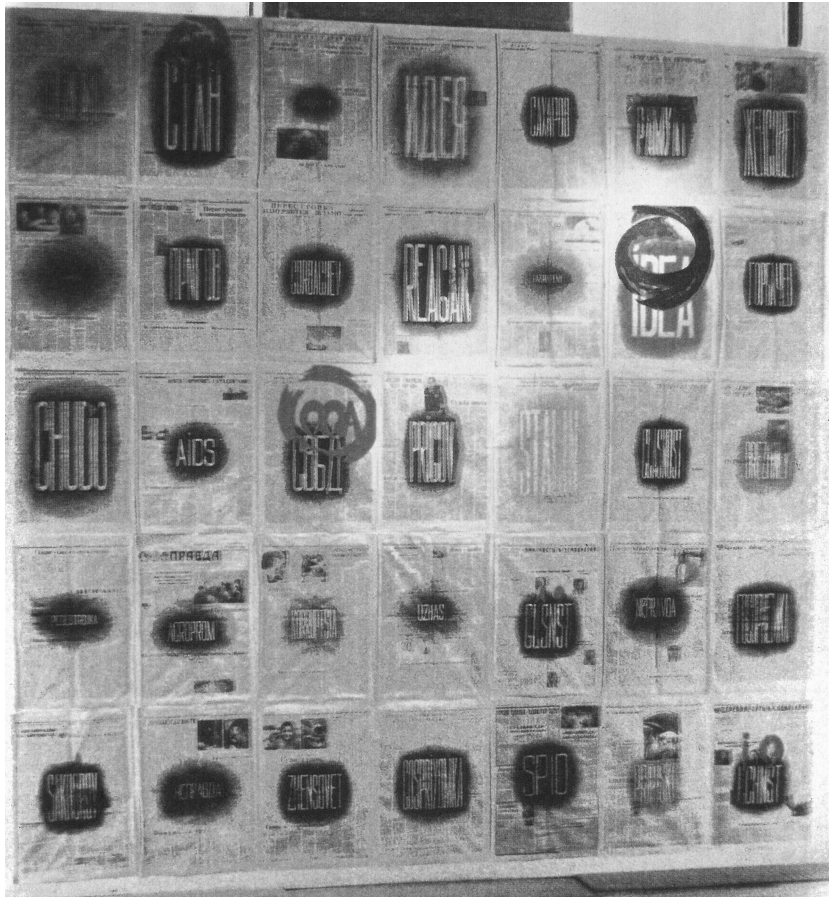
At this new moment of flux in the newspaper's role and in conceptions of Soviet space, Prigov, like Tret'iakov before him, came to engage the newspaper as system and as randomly contiguous text, as both bounded national or imperial form and as unbounded globalism: as a synecdoche for the nation and as an infinitely expandable, never complete, disjunctive metonymic form. Prigov's 1987 series *Gazetnaia installatsiia* (*Newspaper Installation*) emphasizes the spatial organization of the page through a large-scale wall hanging of 7 x 5 newspaper pages, overwritten with words such as "Reagan" and "Stalin," "Ideia" and "Idea" (fig. 3). Just as the newspaper editor pays careful attention to page layout, so Prigov's notes for the exhibition of his work from this period show his attentiveness to the arrangement of juxtaposed pages, images, and words for such composite wall works.⁸⁷ And just as the newspaper page, particularly in the international news that Prigov favored, juxtaposes articles from different geographic regions and cultures, so Prigov's newspaper works stage the Cold War opposition between the Soviet Union and the United States, Russian and English. Yet Prigov's crosshatched, overlaid words transcend the rigid divisions of the columns, complicating the east/west divide and announcing the new terms and ideas—"GLASNOST," "SPID," "AIDS"—that were then filling the newspapers as a result of Gorbachev's injunction to journalists to "speak freely."⁸⁸

Prigov's newspaper wall installations also allude to those in the Soviet avant-garde, such as Tret'iakov, who championed the "wall newspaper" or

86. Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington, 2005), 167; Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses*, 52.

87. Prigov gives elaborate instructions for the creation of wall-hung work through the arrangement of smaller sheets in the Dmitrii Prigov Papers, A-Ya Archive, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, 071.001.049.01–35.

88. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism*, 165.



stengazeta. The term *stengazeta* usually refers to an amateur handwritten or mimeographed newspaper, typically produced in a factory or on a collective farm, although the word can also refer to an official state newspaper pasted on a wall for people to read. Tret'iakov cited the *stengazeta* as an example of the new Soviet reality on the collective farm and of the "transformation of human relations" enabled by such new forms.⁸⁹ Tret'iakov's vision in turn allowed Benjamin to cite the *stengazeta* in imagining the integration of the writer into the collective through a utopian reversal of the bourgeois newspaper's ideological brainwashing of the masses.⁹⁰ In practice, however, the factory or

90. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 1927–1934, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al., eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 770–71.

kolkhoz *stengazeta* was not only part of the Soviet modernization campaign, but also “sheltered, and at times positively reinforced, traditional patterns of conduct and belief.”⁹¹ Prigov’s work juxtaposes Tret’iakov’s and others’ idealization of the *stengazeta* with the various idiosyncratic uses of the genre, by overwriting the centralized authority of *Pravda* and so the ordered hierarchy of journalism that Tret’iakov imagined as a series of concentric circles.

Prigov’s *Moscow* (1989) from his *Gazety* series, for instance, overwrites a single sheet of newspaper from the international news section of the May 3, 1989 edition of *Pravda* to highlight how the newspaper page itself resembles a map of the world (fig. 4). Given the suggestion of the label “СССР” (USSR), Prigov’s darker oblong shape vaguely recalls a map of the Soviet Union, just as the crosshatched circle with the word “Moscow” in the center resembles the circular shape of the city with its famous ring road. (The red dot just above the “СССР” might signify Moscow’s position as the center of Soviet power, though it is too far east for this to be an accurate map of the country.) Prigov’s overwriting emphasizes that the news presents a mapping of the world in relation to the Soviet Union and to its political capital, Moscow, whose centrality is also emphasized by articles grouped together as news from “Strany sotsializma” (Socialist Countries). The overlaid writing is further linked to the newspaper images and text by the various capital cities given as dispatch locations in the newspaper articles, including Washington, Delhi, Berlin, and Sophia. Just as Tret’iakov’s “Through Unpolished Glasses” describes lines on the land that become letters spelling out a redrawing of the world, Prigov’s *Moscow* transforms texts into maps and maps into texts.

By contrasting the print newspaper with crosshatched drawing and handwritten letters, Prigov also points to the duality of the newspaper as a geo-poetic form. In overwriting the ordered and hierarchical printed page, Prigov exposes arbitrary relations of contiguity, underlying ideological and geographic biases (signified by the overwhelmingly large lettering for the Soviet capital), and the reader’s freedom to select or ignore (or here, literally, blot out) articles based on individual desires, desires that were being fueled by the new frankness and sensationalism of glasnost-era newspapers.

Prigov further explores the relationship of the reader to the newspaper in his *Video Performance with Newspapers* (1989).⁹² Prigov’s performance begins with a close up of his face. He appears to be lying on a pile of newspapers with an edition of *Pravda* carefully arranged behind his head. For the first minute or so, Prigov silently mouths words apparently read from the newspaper. Then he begins to read aloud as the camera pans out to reveal him lying on a couch of newspapers with further sheets of newsprint engulfing what appears to be an apartment. Prigov then rolls about in the papers, picking up, apparently at random, various items of news, including an article about Gorbachev speaking on perestroika, which Prigov reads with rising volume and agitation.

By placing his performance piece in the interior of an apartment, Prigov

91. Catriona Kelly, “‘A Laboratory for the Manufacture of Proletarian Writers’: The *Stengazeta* (Wall Newspaper), *Kul’turnost’* and the Language of Politics in the Early Soviet Period,” *Europe–Asia Studies* 54, no. 4 (2002): 595.

92. Dmitrii Prigov, *Videoperformans s gazetami* (1989), at vimeo.com/4356948 (last accessed January 29, 2016).

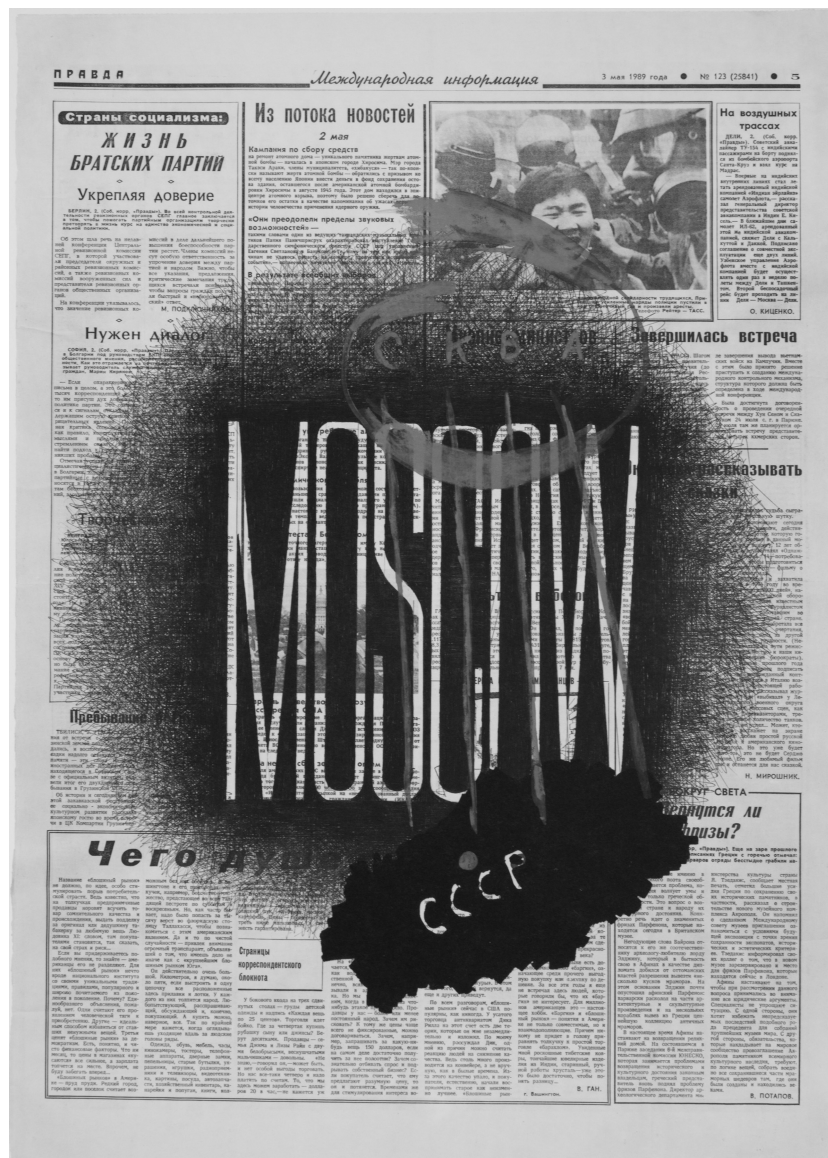


Figure 4. Dmitrii Prigov, *Moscow*, 1989. Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union, D02729. Photo by Peter Jacobs. Courtesy of the Estate of Dmitrii Prigov.

emphasizes the newspaper's role as a liminal object between the domestic realm and the outside social and political world, ironically recalling Benjamin's earlier emphasis on the Soviet elimination of the public/private divide and Tret'iakov's insistence on the power of the press to reach "every corner" of the Soviet Union.⁹³ After reading the article on perestroika, Prigov spends

93. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 30.

several minutes searching through deep piles of newspapers that at one point threaten to submerge him completely. His search illustrates that the newspaper is composed not just of public information but also of dreams, desires, and other feelings that were given new voice by glasnost and that are here experienced spatially and bodily. Prigov's body touches, is seemingly soothed then roused by the newspapers, whose crinkling white noise matches the confusing and overwhelming verbal noise produced by glasnost and by the rise of previously suppressed nationalisms. Prigov registers these competing nationalisms and their challenge to Soviet spatial unity by reading, in an increasingly hysterical voice, the Central Committee's condemnation of the August 23, 1989 protests in the Baltic States as "nationalist hysteria."⁹⁴ The disordered newspapers and seemingly disordered mind of the speaker produce a sense of proliferating fracture and dispersion that matches the diverse opinions found in perestroika-era newspapers and the confusion of Prigov's newspaper-strewn apartment.

Prigov's staging of the information overload of the glasnost period as a spatial form recalls and inverts Tret'iakov's updating of the aesthetics of the sublime. For Tret'iakov, the experience of being overwhelmed by the new scale of information, enabled by new technologies and embodied by the modern newspaper, led to a compensatory spatial expansion that revised the imperial sublime for the Soviet era. Prigov's *Video Performance with Newspapers* echoes this informational sublime but stresses instead the disintegrative potentials of the sublime's metonymic expansion. Recalling how the nineteenth-century newspaper supported a sense of spatial unity across the vast webs of European empires and the nascent nationalisms that eventually tore those empires apart, Prigov presents the Soviet newspaper—once the "organizer," "brain," and "axis" of Soviet space—as a mess of newsprint, whose disorder figures the spatial disorder of the Soviet Union and presages its disintegration.

At this time, Prigov turned to large-scale, three-dimensional newspaper installations to signal the ritualized, daily role of the newspaper in the Soviet spatial imaginary and the crumbling of that imaginary and its certainties. In *Krasnyi ugol* (*Red Corner*, 1989; fig. 5), Prigov presents the newspaper as a modern object of worship, so marking but also complicating the death of the gods of communism and a return to the Orthodox tradition. The title of the work and its presentation refer to the Russian Orthodox red corner, the place where family icons are displayed and worshipped in the home. In producing a red corner out of Soviet newspapers, Prigov also alludes to the Soviet adaptation of the Orthodox tradition: the little red corner (*krasnyi ugolok*) that served as a shrine to Lenin and Soviet communism and became a fixture of Soviet offices, factories, and homes after the creation of the first "Lenin corner" for an exhibition in Moscow in 1923. This exhibition included paintings illustrating the life and times of Lenin, Soviet slogans, posters, and other propaganda material that employed Lenin's words, and vitrines filled with historical materials, including newspapers, especially those featuring articles written by

94. "Zaiavlenie TsK KPSS o polozhenii v respublikakh Sovetskoi Pribaltiki," *Pravda*, August 27, 1989.



Figure 5. Dmitrii Prigov, *Krasnyi ugol* (Red Corner), 1989. Image reproduced from Ol'ga Kholmogorova, *Sots-art* (Moscow, 1994). Courtesy of the Estate of Dmitrii Prigov.

Lenin.⁹⁵ Subsequent Soviet little red corners expanded on this example, often displaying sheets of newspaper prominently among their communist iconography.⁹⁶ Prigov's work explores how little red corners marked not only a fusion of Soviet and Orthodox iconography but also a new kind of integration of public and private space, whereby the public events and figures in the newspaper came literally to define the private spaces of Soviet interiors, an idea that Prigov extends ad absurdum in the newspaper-strewn apartment of his 1989 video performance.

Just as the Lenin corners and little red corners projected communist ideology onto Orthodox tradition and fused private and public space, Prigov's repetition of the corner in 1989 suggests a reverse transition from communist

95. *Ugolok imeni V. I. Ul'ianova-Lenina* (Moscow, 1923).

96. Walter Benjamin in "Moscow Diary" (1927) describes how "every Lenin niche has its wall newspaper." Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 40.

iconography back to Orthodox tradition and reimagines the fusion of the newspaper with architectural and geopolitical space. The installation includes the words “Konstantinopol” and “Roma,” crossed out in red, alongside the words “Moscow” and its Russian counterpart “Москва.” Prigov here refers to the idea that Moscow is the third Rome, after the earlier seats of Christendom: Rome and then, for Eastern Orthodox believers, Constantinople. The idea of Moscow as the messianic center of truth was revived by the Bolsheviks, who shifted the capital of the newly formed Soviet state back to Moscow and, with the support of “active proselytizers for the cult of Moscow” such as Tret’iakov, sought to make the city the center of both communist revolution and world civilization—what Katerina Clark terms the “post-Christian,” communist “fourth Rome.”⁹⁷

Where Tret’iakov hailed the newspaper-epic as the symbolic form commensurate to the spatial reach of this fourth Rome, Prigov’s newspapers replay Orthodox and Soviet epic historical and geographic ambitions only to demolish them under the spatial confusion produced by the dangerous piling up of information and by the conflation of textual, architectural, and geopolitical space. In Prigov’s installation, the word “Рим” (Rome) remains undeleted, underscoring Moscow’s and Russia’s assumption of Rome’s imperial and religious position at the center of the world. At the same time, the banner overhead declares, “Rimu—Rim!” (Rome for Rome), echoing and inverting the Soviet slogan “Miru—mir!” (Peace to the world). In this way, Moscow gives up its messianic Soviet destiny as the fourth Rome and its corresponding claims to the entire “world” (*mir*), leaving Rome to the Romans. Accentuating the collapse of old gods, ambitions, and claims to global centrality, the chaotic assemblage of newspapers (which only reaches a semblance of order in the labeled “corner,” or “ugol”) is cordoned off, and the viewer warned off by the sign “опасно” (danger). The sign suggests a building site—the spatial metaphor through which Lenin imagined a revolutionary newspaper almost a century earlier—or perhaps, signaling the reversal of that revolution: a site of demolition.

Exhibited from April to July 1991, Prigov’s *China*, from his *100 Ideas for Installation* (fig. 6), marks the imminent end of the Soviet era, confirmed just a month later by the failure of the August coup. Prigov installed the work as part of a group exhibition in Berlin, the city whose reunification symbolized the disintegration of the Soviet bloc. Prigov here adapts the original use of the communist little red corner, which memorialized the dying Lenin, to create a memorial for the expiring Soviet Union and its preeminent national newspaper, *Pravda*, whose title forms a central visual focus of the installation (both between Prigov’s signature red dot and the white dot of the *i* and above and to the left of the large eye). Photographs from the 1920s regularly feature Soviet workers sitting reading newspapers in front of their corners. Echoing such images, Prigov marks the demise of communism through a mannequin figure who might be, in the approved style of this period of Soviet propaganda, reading the paper; or who might be in the act of icon worship; or perhaps, as the bloody red head suggests, he is on his knees because he is on the point of death.

97. Clark, *Moscow*, 34, 2.



Figure 6. Dmitrii Prigov, *China*, 1991. Photograph by Wolfgang Neeb. Courtesy of the Estate of Dmitrii Prigov and the Krings-Ernst Galerie, Cologne, Germany.

China marks the death spatially through the descent from the neatly pasted *stengazeta* in the top center downwards and towards the viewer along the left and right walls to the confusion of the newspapers strewn across the floor—a downward flow that suggests the mourning eye is weeping newspapers. Equally, the title lettering in the bottom back center implies a spatial shift eastwards. A rising China replaces the Soviet Union—its newspaper *Pravda* and its claims to communist “truth”—as the leader of the communist world, a shift reinforced just two years earlier by the Chinese government’s crackdown on student protesters, also possibly alluded to in the red dot and the mannequin’s bloody head.

Prigov links this moment of geopolitical flux to the destabilizing possibili-

ties of the newspaper's spatial poetics, explored earlier by Berlin Dada, which likewise employed newspaper collage and clippings alongside painted images and also fused high seriousness with absurdity. Slumped over the newspapers with its head wrapped in bandages, Prigov's mannequin recalls in particular John Heartfield's *Wer Bürgerblätter liest wird blind und taub. Weg mit den verdummungsbandagen!* (*Whoever Reads Bourgeois Newspapers Goes Blind and Deaf. Away with Bandages that Make you Dimwitted!*, 1930)—comprising a head wrapped in newspaper as a depiction of the insidious power of the press—and Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter's mannequin-like *Preussischer Erzengel* (*Prussian Archangel*, 1920), which was hung from the ceiling in the First International Dada Fair in Berlin alongside headlines such as “Die Kunst ist tot” (Art is dead).

China marks a double dissolution: the collapse of the Soviet Union and the death of art in the face of mass media—a dissolution that Tret'iakov hailed in the second half of the 1920s through a similar turn to China and the newspaper. At the end of the twentieth century, however, Prigov's work also anticipates the approaching death of the print newspaper through a new information revolution as profound as that which first propelled the newspaper to the position of preeminent mass medium. Prigov links communism's demise to the decline of the newspaper and print culture in the age of ubiquitous visual media, as marked by his own turn from samizdat poetry to video and installation art.⁹⁸ *China* registers the rise of visual culture, but it equally anticipates a new world of religious revival, globalization, information overload, and digital culture, in which the textual and spatial confusion of the newspaper is redoubled in the hypertext of the webpage. The mannequin knee-deep in newspapers depicts the individual overwhelmed by the new information order, as the former certainties and rigid ideologies of the Cold War era give way to an overwhelming mass of text and a confusion of exhibition and geopolitical space. The newspaper becomes a form not only for imagining national and imperial space but also for rendering spatially the confusion of global information.

Over a decade later, Prigov's 2004 installation *Videnie Kasparu Davidu Fridrikhu russkogo Tibeta* (*Caspar David Friedrich's Vision of Russian Tibet*) directly connects the digital age's mountains of information to the spatial poetics of the newspaper and the sublime (fig. 7). The overwhelming volume of text in the earlier newspaper installations now becomes the material with which Prigov sculpts the mountain peaks of Friedrich's *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818). The central focal points of the red dot and eye remain from Prigov's *China*, but the newspapers no longer coalesce into any order. Instead, Prigov depicts the confusion and decentralizing of the press in the post-Soviet period through a spatial form

98. Prigov's post-Soviet work frequently explores what he saw as the “complete disappearance of Russian literature as a significant sociocultural phenomenon” and the dominant influence of audiovisual culture. Svetlana Beliaeva-Konegen and Dmitrii Prigov, “Krepkogo vam zdorov'ia, gospoda literary,” *Strelets* 70, no. 3 (1992): 209; Dmitrii Prigov, “Uteshaet li nas eto ponimanie?,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 62 (2003): 391. See also Jacob Edmond, *A Common Strangeness* (New York, 2012), 151–61. Debray also links the demise of socialism to the decline of print culture in “Socialism,” esp. 6, 19–20, 27.



Figure 7. Dmitrii Prigov, *Videnie Kasparu Davidu Fridrikhu russkogo Tibeta* (*Caspar David Friedrich's Vision of Russian Tibet*), 2004. Courtesy of the Estate of Dmitrii Prigov.

that gives no single newspaper priority. Prigov links the metonymic boundlessness of the newspaper both to the post-Soviet proliferation and diversification of newspapers in Russia and to the larger explosion in information wrought by the World Wide Web.⁹⁹

Yet in a twist, Prigov deploys the apparent confusion of non-hierarchically organized text to reactivate the sublime's fusion of the "poetics of space" with "allegories of national identity." In transforming piles of newspapers into lofty mountain peaks, Prigov recalls late-1930s Stalinist culture's turn "away from the cities" and toward the "improbable horizontal and vertical expanses" of "untamed nature."¹⁰⁰ In reiterating a key image of German romanticism, Prigov links the Stalinist sublime to Russia's imperial sublime. Just as in the Soviet imperial sublime "the loftier Pamir Mountains of Central Asia largely supplanted the Caucasus" (a frequent subject of the Russian imperial sublime), so Prigov makes his newspapers model post-Soviet Russia's loftiest peaks, the Altai mountain range—also called "Russian Tibet."¹⁰¹ The name "Russian Tibet" connects Prigov's Buddhism-inspired "mantric prac-

99. Around this time, Prigov became involved in producing online news, contributing a regular column to the political news site Polit.ru from early 2005 until his death. He published a reworking of these columns interspersed with poems in *Raznoobrazie vsego* (Moscow, 2007).

100. Clark, *Moscow*, 276–77, 286–87.

101. Clark, *Moscow*, 291.

tice" to Russia's imperial possessiveness.¹⁰² Prigov's *Vision* thus suggests an ironic reprise of Tret'iakov's earlier attempt to fuse the avant-gardist and statist geopoetics of the newspaper through the aesthetics of the sublime. Just as the second half of the 1920s saw a narrowing of options for Lef writers and the 1930s a return to the imperial sublime, so the proliferating voices of the 1990s Russian press were by 2004 giving way to a more unitary vision.¹⁰³ Suggesting the shift to Putin's "managed democracy," Prigov's *Vision* transforms confused, juxtaposed texts into a coherent, sublime imperial form, presented, appropriately, in that center for the display of Russian art, the Tret'iakov Gallery in Moscow.

Prigov's *Vision* does not simply repeat the Russian and Soviet imperial sublime. It rethinks such spatial imaginaries in the context of the new information order of digital networks, negatively signified by the strewn, discarded leaves of newspaper and, implicitly, print culture. Prigov underscores the spatial differences between page and screen by using newspapers printed on only one side.¹⁰⁴ He thereby contrasts the newspapers' screen-like flatness of layout, replicable on the webpages of online newspapers, with their three-dimensional existence as sheets of paper, accentuated by the perspectival depth of the installation. Where Tret'iakov's Soviet newspaper as epic mapped a system of spatial organization, Prigov's unreadable (on one side literally blank) and so unmappable dump of newspapers might conversely signify how the "new decentred global network" outstrips "the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself . . . and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world."¹⁰⁵ Marking the difficulty of fixing one's location in the current digital information order, Prigov replaces Friedrich's lone wanderer with an empty park bench, so that each viewer becomes part of the work and the work becomes as multiple as its viewers. In this sense, Prigov offers a "vision" of the "postmodern sublime"—of the "impossible totality of the contemporary world system."¹⁰⁶ At the same time, he elegizes the Russian and Soviet imperial sublime and the informational and spatial order of the newspaper.

Prigov's installation also problematizes the "data sublime" and with it

102. Dmitrii Prigov, "Iz zhizni installiatsii," *Gif*, June 18, 2004, at www.gif.ru/persona/prigov (last accessed January 29, 2016). Compare the mantra-like repetition of the word "Rossiia" in Prigov's art video *Rossiia* (2004), at www.youtube.com/watch?v=p28B67twgwg (last accessed January 29, 2016).

103. In 2001, critics already noted that "the balance between state media and private media has become immensely skewed in favor of the state" and "there are real risks in going too far in criticizing the government." Masha Lipman and Michael McFaul, "'Managed Democracy' in Russia: Putin and the Press," *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 6, no. 3 (June 2001): 124. The following years saw newspapers generally "return . . . to simple information rather than challenging news and investigative journalism." Birgit Beumers, Stephen Hutchings, and Natalia Rulyov, introduction to Birgit Beumers, Stephen Hutchings, and Natalia Rulyov, eds., *The Post-Soviet Russian Media: Conflicting Signals* (London, 2009), 21–22.

104. Sergei Khachaturov, "On sdelal stavku na nichto," *Vremia novostei*, June 21, 2004, at www.vremya.ru/2004/105/10/101025.html (last accessed January 29, 2016).

105. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 1/146 (July–August 1984): 80, 83.

106. Jameson, "Postmodernism," 80.

the fantasy of the frictionless global circulation of information. This rhetoric of “data transcendence” or digital disembodiment “divorces content from presentation” and hence seems to render the world unmappable.¹⁰⁷ Yet far from ignoring form, Prigov makes the form of the newspapers—their arrangement in the gallery—and the embodied subject who views them into a map and model of Friedrich’s painting and of the highest Russian peaks. Likewise, instead of marking the encounter with the spatial vastness of nature, as in Friedrich’s *Wanderer*, Prigov’s work confronts us with the mass-produced and finite but extremely numerous products of newsprint. He installs snowdrift-like accumulations of paper that would seem to replace the spatial poetics of sublime totality with what Sianne Ngai calls the “stuplime” poetics of “finite bits and scraps of material in repetition.”¹⁰⁸

Prigov’s *Vision* also differs from Ngai’s account of the stuplime as a site of resistance to the postmodern, digital sublime. Prigov invites us to attend to each separate sheet of newsprint and to survey the newspapers from a distance, to see the high peaks of the imperial sublime. Through this oscillation between the stuplime and the sublime—between metonymic limitlessness and synecdochic projections of totality—the installation signals the newspaper page’s ambivalent spatial poetics. The installation transforms vast distances into apparent proximities and so simultaneously projects and undoes spatial and temporal boundaries: between Friedrich’s mountainous landscapes in Bohemia and Saxony and the loftier peaks of Russia’s Altai mountain range; between the early nineteenth and the early twenty-first century; and between German and Russian nationalism.

Prigov describes the newspapers in the installation as a “metaphor for the person, in which among the squelchy flesh and fragile bones inexplicably hide . . . incredibly lofty ideas, deep thoughts and almost inexpressible experiences and passions.”¹⁰⁹ Prigov’s characteristic appeal to the mythic, metaphorical, and allegorical alongside an equally strong insistence on the finite fact of heaps of materials—the body as a lump of bone and flesh, and the real bodies who sit on the bench and survey these metaphorical bodies—straddles the boundary between the stuplime and the sublime. Relatedly, it spans the two geopoetic forms that I have identified with the newspaper: a symbolic form that unifies vast imperial and federal spaces; and a form that undoes such spatial projections both through ever-widening networks of global interconnectivity and through continuously bifurcating fragments of location and textual and bodily materiality.

What makes it possible for Tret’iakov and Prigov to balance these geopoetic potentials of the newspaper is that both are based on the spatial-rhetorical figure of metonymy. Modernist poetics and modern geopolitics share a tension between the synecdochic resolution of contiguous fragments into a larger whole—be it a nation-state or a work of art—and the endless metonymic expansion of relations of contiguity. As Tret’iakov’s and Prigov’s work

107. Alan Liu, “Transcendental Data: Toward a Cultural History and Aesthetics of the New Encoded Discourse,” *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 1 (2004): 74.

108. Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 271.

109. Prigov, “Iz zhizni installiatsii.”

illustrates, this structural tension finds expression in the analogous tension between spatial limitlessness and totality in the aesthetics of the sublime. Both the modernist poetics of spatial form—which emphasizes fragmentation, montage, and collage—and the modern geopolitical imaginary (which privileges the nation-state and the international world-system) share a tension between the unity of part and whole and the limitlessness of metonymic relatedness.

Tret'iakov's and Prigov's newspaper works suggest that Soviet and Russian newspapers of the 1920s and 1980s through 2000s not only responded to dramatic changes in geopolitics and media technology but also provided a symbolic form for mapping corresponding shifts in Soviet, Russian, and global space. By linking the poetics of juxtaposition to the mass discourse of the newspaper and Soviet and Russian nationalist and imperialist ideologies, Tret'iakov's and Prigov's works indicate the wider importance of modernist spatial form to understanding the geopoetic and geopolitical function of the modern newspaper from the nineteenth century to today.

The digital revolution of our era now threatens the print newspaper with obsolescence even as it redoubles the difficulty of understanding a world of increasingly complex information networks. The new digital information order might bring a reactionary desire for simpler national and imperial spatial imaginaries, such as those invoked in Prigov's *Vision*. But it also allows us to recognize the newspaper as a still potent symbolic form for mapping the complexity of global modernity. The print newspaper combines the seeming elimination of vast spatial distance with a stubbornly place-bound materiality. It maps discontinuity and difference alongside a totalizing vision as if from a peak or airplane: as if the world were, in Mallarmé's horrified, fascinated words, "one vast page."